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Malt Products Corporation extends facilities with new innovation lab



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US-based Malt Products Corporation (MPC), a specialist manufacturer of malted barley extract and other natural sweeteners, has designed an Innovations Lab to help firms in the sector, including confectionery markets with ingredients testing.

As the company noted, its new facilities at its Minneapolis site will allow customers to experiment with new formulations and gain insight into critical flavour and stability properties, which remain key aspects of new product development.

The lab will be utilised for a wide variety of products, including baked goods, creamers, nut butters, chocolates, confections, dressings & marinades, yogurts, as well as further the company's push into the burgeoning plant-based proteins sector.

Amid a consumer push for more natural, nutritious ingredients, Malt Products Corp. regularly helps customers reformulate food and beverage products as they turn away from artificial or non-nutritive sweeteners. The company's portfolio of pantry-friendly sweeteners includes MaltRite malt extract, OatRite oat extract and CaneRite sugar cane molasses. MPC produces both dry and liquid sweeteners.



The lab incorporates a variety of recent infrastructure investments including ovens, mixers, shearers, proofers and temperature-controlled incubators, as well as analytical equipment such as spectrometers and instruments monitoring water activity and rheology. It collaborates with MPC's main manufacturing facility in Dayton, OH to help customers expediently transition from development to production.

In addition to being all natural, many of MPC's sweeteners contain health benefits such as proteins and antioxidants. For baked goods, many assist with the Maillard reaction for attractive browning, and protect shelf life by controlling viscosity. Malt extract in particular is also an attractive ingredient for the exploding non-alcoholic beer

market, serves as an excellent base for fermented drinks like Kombucha, and supports the viability of probiotics in specialty teas.

The new space is a combination analytical zone and kitchen for product development and testing, sensory evaluation and shelf life testing, allowing food & beverage companies to branch out into new ingredients and flavouring possibilities. The lab also features office space for meetings, problem solving, and interactive product and business development.

“As more companies look to revamp their products using all-natural ingredients, the new Innovation Lab provides a hub for formulation experimentation, testing the viability of various ingredients regarding flavour, binding, shelf life and other critical factors,” said Amy Targan, president of Malt Products Corp. “We want to make it as easy as possible to prototype new products with healthier, pantry-friendly ingredients, and for our customers to understand these products’ mission-critical characteristics.”

She added that for confectionary manufacturers, the new innovation lab is suitable for formulation and ingredient experimentation for ganaches, cookies, pralines and pretzels.

Furthermore, Targan noted that during the pandemic, even though they are still making goods, many medium and large companies are not using their employees for innovation, so the pace of innovation has slowed. MPC’s Innovation Lab can help reinvigorate innovation timelines, as well as reduce resources needed at our customers’ facilities. And for startups and companies with limited application and analytical resources, MPC can provide solutions to various technical challenges.

“The food sector, of course, is an essential service, so from the standpoint of manufacturing and supply chain disruption the impact fortunately has been minimal. But anything as all-permeating as the coronavirus crisis is having a widespread impact on consumer behaviour. In this case, everyone is home more, and therefore more likely to snack a bit more. What we’re seeing is consumers acknowledging this and addressing it by looking for healthier snacking options.

“In these circumstances, then, our portfolio of nutritious, all-natural sweeteners become an even more attractive option. Consumers are looking for “sugar with substance,” and we benefit in this environment by offering sweeteners with antioxidants, protein, and pro-digestive properties. Malt, oat and molasses also have a throwback, nostalgic feel that, we think, is comforting during these stressful times.”

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